

SPEECH

OF

ARTHUR O'CONNOR, ESQ.

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OF

IRELAND,

MONDAY, MAY 4, 1795:

ON THE

CATHOLIC BILL.

REVISED AND CORRECTED.

LONDON :

Printed for and sold by DANIEL ISAAC EATON, Printer and
Bookseller to the Supreme Majesty of the People, at the
Cock and SWINE, No. 74, Newgate street.

1796.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

125011

125012

125013

125014

125015

125016

125017

125018

125019

125020

125021

125022

125023

125024

125025

125026

125027

125028

125029

125030

125031

125032

SPEECH

OF

ARTHUR O'CONNOR, ESQ.

MR. SPEAKER;

I SHOULD not have trespassed on your time, at this late hour, was it not that, as often as this important subject has been agitated, since I have had a seat in this House, I have given silent votes for the most unqualified emancipation of my Catholic countrymen; from conviction of the justness of their claims to freedom, and of the inexpediency and folly of continuing to sacrifice the civil and political rights of the people, for the purpose of aggrandizing a *few families*, under the mask of promoting religion. But, Sir, the times call for something more than silent votes. The situation in which we are so unaccountably placed, is so critical, and the bill under your consideration involves such consequences in its train, that every man, who is not wholly indifferent to the welfare of his country, must feel himself called on, to lay aside every lesser consideration, and to deliver his opinion with that freedom, and that boldness, by which only the country can be saved.

What

What do the whole of the arguments which have been advanced on this night, against the emancipation of our Catholic countrymen, by the gentlemen of the opposite side of the House, amount to? To a mere unsupported assertion, that it would destroy our Constitution in Church and State. This is not the only instance in this country, in which the most egregious job has been concealed under a specious phraseology. One would imagine, from the language held by the Right Hon. Gentleman, (Mr. Pelham,) that the people of this country were in the actual enjoyment of the British constitution in all its purity, and that it had been in this country, that the experiment of that constitution had been made, by which it had become the admiration of the world. Is it that the condition of the people of Ireland corresponds so well with the great natural advantages of their country, that we are to infer, that their civil and political constitution was of that immaculate nature which the Right Hon. Gentleman, (Pelham,) has represented it? Is it because we were the most wretched, and most miserable nation in Europe, as long as this system of monopoly and exclusion, for which the gentlemen on the opposite side of the House contend, under the title of Constitution in State and Church, was in its most entire state; and that we have emerged from that wretchedness and misery in an exact proportion as we have destroyed this system of monopoly, by extending the blessings of freedom to our Catholic countrymen, that we should now desist from our labours? Is it because we have heard those gentlemen at the opposite side of the house, year after year, ever since this question has been agitated, predict the ruin of
the

the country, from extending the constitution to our Catholic countrymen, and that we have seen the country thrive in an exact proportion as it has been extended, that we should now stop short on their authority, and consecrate the remainder of the system of monopoly and exclusion? Before we risk every thing in defence of a system upon authority, which has hitherto proved so utterly fallacious, let us inquire into its merits.

I will suppose the worst of systems; and I will leave it to the advocates of this system, to show in what it differs from this system of theirs, which they have consecrated under the mystical words of Constitution in Church and State. I will suppose the whole representation of the people of Ireland, converted into a subject of traffic, and a monopoly of the trade given to a few families, with an exception of that small portion of freedom, which falls to the share of the counties: I will suppose, even this pittance assailed by these monopolists, by their profuse distributions of jobs and of patronage, and by their appointing the men of the best interests in their several counties, to seats for their boroughs, whom they could find mean enough to accept them, on the condition of servitude and wages in so vile an occupation; I will suppose these wholesale dealers in our rights and liberties, coming from their rotten boroughs, and from the counties they had debauched, with their attendant supporters of Constitution in Church and State, to discharge their cargo at the seat of government, at the counting house of an English factor; bartering an unqualified sacrifice of rich trade, of Irish industry, of Irish rights, and of Irish character, at the feet of English domination, and of English avarice. For what? What shall I suppose the

the price of this infernal cargo, like Pandora's box, a collection of every ill that can afflict mankind? The whole notion of Ireland would blush to hear it! They would blush at their own degradation! Nothing less than the most unqualified sacrifice of every thing in this unfortunate country, that could exalt these farmers-general of our rights and liberties, and of every thing that could debase an injured, insulted, and impoverished people. Here is a system by which our national character would be degraded in the eyes of surrounding nations. Here is a system by which the people of this country would be doubly impoverished, to pay for that treason which was to revile and vilify them in the legislature of their own country, and to pay for that treason which was to sacrifice their dearest interest to the aggrandizement of another nation; I CALL UPON THE GENTLEMEN OF THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE HOUSE, TO SHEW IN WHAT THIS EXECRABLE SYSTEM DIFFERS FROM THE CONSTITUTION IN CHURCH AND STATE, FOR WHICH THEY CONTEND? And yet you have been told, that, on the continuance of this system, your lives, your liberties, your property, and your religion depend;—on the continuance of this system, you have been told your constitution depends. Nay, to fill up the measure of their effrontery, there are men who will unblushingly tell you, that this system, so profitable to them, and so ruinous to the country, *shall be your constitution itself!*

Fortunately, it is no longer a subjects of contention between the Protestants and the Catholics; for every man in this country, except monopolist, and those in pay of monopolists, whether Protestants, Presbyterians, or Catholics, have

have declared themselves equally interested in the destruction of this odious system. Fortunately the Protestants and Presbyterians of Ireland have, at length, discovered the folly of sacrificing their own rights and the prosperity of their country, in a criminal attempt to exclude three-fourths of their countrymen from the blessings of freedom, for no other purpose than to perpetuate a system, in which a *few families* are unnaturally exalted, at the expense of millions of their countrymen, as unnaturally debased. But it is no longer a secret that the men who oppose the abolition of religious distinctions in our civil and political concerns, when the general voice of the nation has concurred it so wise, so just, and so politic a measure, are *the men who usurp the whole political power of the country, the men who have converted the whole representation of Ireland into family patrimony; to the poverty, to the oppression, and to the disgrace of the nation, and to the monstrous aggrandizement of themselves, their relatives, and their servile adherents; THESE ARE THE MEN WHO OPPOSE CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION, and why? because Catholic emancipation would be incompatible with their accursed monopoly. Here lies the incapacity of the Catholics to participate in the freedom of their country; here lies the excellence of the present constitution in church and state. In this is comprised the whole guilt of our Catholic countrymen, and in the eyes of men of this description, the same incapacity would attach itself to angels from heaven, if the abolition of their accursed monopoly was to make any part of the consequence.*

Let those men who flatter themselves that they can continue the old system of monopoly and exclusion, by which the few have been raised on the necks of the many,

many, risk what they please in its defence ; but let me conjure you, who are without the pale of their political communion, to consider the important change which has taken place in the public mind, to consider the language which has been spoken by all descriptions of men, from one end of the kingdom to the other. Let me conjure you to consider, that you are no longer legislating for the barbarous ignorant ages which are gone by, but that you must now legislate for the more enlightened and more intelligent age in which you live, and for the still more enlightened ages which are to come. It is on these safe and liberal grounds I invite you to weigh the arguments which have been advanced on this night against the emancipation of your Catholic countrymen. — An Hon. Gentleman (Ogle) says, if you emancipate them, they will get the upper hand, and they will erect a Popish government; and a noble Lord (Kingsborough) says, that Catholic emancipation is incompatible with protestant freedom, which assertions are founded on the supposition, that the Catholics pay such implicit obedience to their clergy in religious matters, that they will destroy our liberties by paying a like implicit obedience to the civil magistrate in political concerns. Is there any thing in the conduct of the Catholics at this day to warrant these charges? It is not harrowing up charges from the barbarous ages that are gone by? Ask the Catholic clergy, and they will tell you that their power is declined. Ask the Protestant gentry from one end of the kingdom to the other, and they will tell you that the superstitious power of the Catholic clergy is at an end. But have you not heard the Right Honourable Gentle-

man

man (Pelham) on this night lament the decline of this power? Have you not heard him in the vilest prostitution of terms, lament its decline, as the decline of a wholesome controul? But whilst it is with joy I express my satisfaction, that all superstitious controul over the minds of my Catholic countrymen is at an end, as that circumstance, which puts the justice of their claims to freedom beyond all doubt, I cannot, nor will not, suppress my detestation and abhorrence of the Right Hon. Gentleman's (Pelham's) doctrine, which would make a superstitious, a wholesome controul; at this doctrine of passive obedience, which would revive the reign of ignorance and superstition; at this doctrine, of despots, who having some infernal system of oppression to support, and shrinking from the light of reason, would re-plunge us into that darkness and obscurity we have escaped.

Backed, then, by the authority of the Catholic clergy, backed by the authority of the Protestant gentry, and backed by the still more general authority of the general observations of every man within and without these walls, from one end of the kingdom to the other; I will assume it as a fact, that the superstitious controul of the Catholic clergy over the Catholic mind is at an end. What becomes of the charge of a Popish government? What becomes of the insecurity of the Protestants, from the Catholics sacrificing your liberties, by paying a like implicit obedience to the civil magistrate? Is there any thing like this in the conduct of the Catholics? Has the Hon. Gentleman and the Noble Lord who have made these charges, found the Catholics so criminally indifferent to the blessings of civil and political liberty?

Have those gentlemen who have left no *secret means* untied to defeat Catholic freedom, found them so criminally tame and submissive under the pressure of civil and political exclusion? Is it a fact, that the Catholic laity have been so slack, and so backward in the pursuit after civil and political liberty, as to require the incitement of their clergy? Or is it the characteristic of the clergy of any religion to be very ardent in the pursuit after civil and political liberty? I put it to the gentlemen at the opposite side of the house, does the current of public opinion at this time in any nation of Europe, run in favour of despotism, or of Popery, or of Popish government? But these gentlemen do not perceive the contradictory nature of the arguments they have this night advanced against Catholic freedom. At one time they represent them as men so priest-ridden, as to endanger the constitution, by erecting a Popish, slavish government; in the same breath they represent them as overthrowing the constitution, by their democratical and republican principles, serving up at the same instant, the most heterogeneous compositions that were ever offered to the human mind. But I refer those gentlemen to the history of mankind, where they will find that the men who have been really and dangerously priest-ridden, have invariably borne the yoke of despotism with patience and resignation; but whenever they have assumed sufficient courage to assert their civil and political rights, it was not until after they had thrown off the tyranny of the priesthood. Reasoning from this indisputable fact, instead of agreeing with the gentlemen opposite, that the firm tone in which the Catholics have demanded their freedom should be a ground
for

for refusal, I shall ask no better proof that they are entitled to liberty, than their having had the spirit to claim it.

But the gentlemen on the other side of the House, knowing the weakness of these contradictory arguments, have had recourse to prophecy. They have entrenched themselves in the fastness of futurity, and in the spirit of divination they have accused us, who are advocates for Catholic freedom, with the ruin of posterity. To this prophetic accusation I answer, as far as prophetic accusation admits of an answer, that the dark ages of ignorance and superstition have ever proved congenial to the tyranny of priests and despots ; but that the independence which has arisen from the intercourse of nation with nation, from the invention of the mariner's compass, and the knowledge which has flowed from the invention of the press, have proved fatal to its continuance. Look round the world, and you will find in those countries where foreign commerce is discouraged, and where the invention of the press is unknown, that despotism uniformly prevails over liberty : look to China and the East Indies ; look to Persia, to the Ottoman and African empires, those immense portions of the globe, where foreign commerce is discouraged, and where the invention of the press is either disused or unknown, and you will find the civil and political rights of the people immersed in ignorance, superstition, and abject servility ; the sport of the most rapacious despotism. In these countries the ears of the governing power are never grated with the harsh sounds of the

rights of man : no ; all is despotism on the part of the governors, all is passive obedience on the part of the people. Turn your eyes from these wretched countries to the several nations of Europe, and you will find how uniformly civil, political, and religious liberty have taken place of civil, political, and religious slavery, in proportion as foreign commerce has been encouraged, and as the press has been protected. See how uniformly these causes and effects correspond ; and if any one of you doubt that these great causes are at this moment operating those salutary effects, I refer him to the despots of Europe, and this war in which they have immolated so many human sacrifices, and in which they have deluged all Europe with such torrents of blood, and their present fears for their darling despotism, shall be their answer. But it is some consolation to me to reflect, that the avarice of these despots, which has tempted them to encourage foreign commerce in their dominions, and the vanity or necessity which has led them, or obliged them to give some protection to education and the press, is at this moment sowing the seeds of that independence and knowledge which will one day crush that despotism even which they and their bloodhounds have disgraced.

Impressed with these great and important truths, is it when our country is becoming commercial, under all its artificial disadvantages—is it when we have thrown off some of the shackles of our trade, and when, by passing this bill, by creating a people, we shall be enabled to restore it to perfect freedom, that we are to reject this bill, through fear of destroying posterity ? Is it when
know-

knowledge is progressive among us, when the youth* of the nation are giving such brilliant examples, that liberality of thought is the offspring of education? Is it when our Catholic countrymen are displaying such eminent talents in the pursuit after civil and political liberty†; talents which I am sorry to say we have had many examples this night to prove how much more easy it is to vilify, than to rival, or imitate. Is it under these circumstances we are to entertain fears for posterity? Is it when our countrymen have resumed their reason in such an eminent degree, that we should suspect them of relapsing into ignorance and superstition? Is it when our Catholic countrymen are claiming their civil and political rights, with the address, and firmness of men of enlightened minds, that we should suspect them of relapsing into slavery and a Popish government, basely surrendering the noblest privileges of man? Never shall such tinsel reasonings make me see the future ruin of my country in the actual freedom of my countrymen; never shall such weak argument dissuade me from an act of immutable justice, where the rights and liberties of millions of my countrymen were at stake upon the issue: no; on this head the prospect is a bright one, and accursed be that man,

* An allusion to the students who preferred going to Francis Street Chapel, where the Catholic delegates were giving an account of their reception at St. James's, than attending Lord Camden with an address.

† The able speeches made at Francis Street Chapel, by Messrs. Keough, M'Nevin, Ryan, and Leivins, were grossly abused by some of the members. *Vide the debate, printed for J. Debreit.*

who,

who, for interested motives, would darken or obscure its lustre.

So much for the dangers of your constitution in state : but the church is in danger. What is that part of the system to which the Protestant religion is under such obligations ? What is that part of the system with whose destruction the destruction of the Protestant religion is so closely connected ? It is simply the system of conversion ; but is it a system of conversion from conviction ? No ; it shuts every avenue leading to conviction ; it closes every door by which a Catholic could enter the Protestant church ; they have been barred by those rewards and punishments which short-sighted bigotry invented for the purpose of forcing religious opinions. By this system you have exposed the Catholic who is willing to follow the dictates of conviction, to the execration of his own sect, for deserting them, because he appears to have done so, to escape the penalties annexed to adherence ; and you have exposed him to the contempt of the Protestants, whose tenets you wish him to embrace, by making him appear to them, as a man who had sold his principles, his religion, and his God, for no other purpose, than to gain the immunities you hold out to conversion. Instead of promoting your religion, you have called forth the dread of execration and contempt, to steel the Catholic mind against that conversion you affect to promote, and to attach him to that religion from which you wish to estrange him. Thus it is that narrow-minded bigotry, ever defeats its own ends by the means it employs to attain them. You have not its heats nor its passions to excuse you, but you have had the experience of its example to direct

direct you. Cease, then, to prescribe to the Almighty the extent and manner of the adoration he shall receive; cease to place your rewards and punishments in competition with his, for you cannot but observe, how thoroughly the blasphemous presumption has exposed the impotency of the attempt. Act like legislators. Leave the way to conviction and conversion as free and as open as the superiority of the tenets of your religion appears to you clear and indisputable. Act like men sensible of your duty to your Creator. Presume not to meddle with opinions he has not given you faculties to understand, and which require his omniscience to controul. Away with that system which exacts the sacrifice of the civil and political rights of the people, for the ineffectual purpose of promoting religion. We have tried it long enough in this unfortunate country to prove its inefficacy. It has had free scope amongst us ever since the passing the law against recusants in the reign of Elizabeth, until these few years that we have begun on its abolition; and if you would judge fairly of the merits of the system, and of its abolition, by their effects, I call on you on this night, to choose between centuries of disunion, of civil wars, and of wretchedness unexampled in any nation on the globe, and a few years rapid progress in union, in civilization, and in the industry of the people.

But I find it is not enough to have combated this last objection in its own shape; it is not enough that I have proved to you that you have not promoted your religion by this system of persecution; for, in opposition to the professions and the *tolerant* principles of those gentlemen who oppose this bill, I do assert that every, the least disability on
account

account of *religious opinions, makes part of the system of persecution.* The objection makes its appearance in another shape, and the dangers which were said to threaten the Protestant religion from Catholic emancipation, have been made by an Honourable Gentleman, (Mr. Pelham,) to re-appear in the shape of dangers which he says threaten the Protestant establishment. He has confounded the establishment with the religion, and, by an artful transmigration, he has made the Protestant establishment to stand for the soul of the Protestant religion; and after we have defeated the objection under the colours of the one, he has made it to rally, Antæus like, with additional strength, under the colours of the other. I say with additional strength, for I am aware that Protestant establishment is a word of that mystic meaning in this House, that those who would wish to retain it in that state of consecration in which it has been placed by the priesthood in the days of our most inveterate bigotry, have a considerable advantage over me, who would examine its meaning before the tribunal of reason. It is their interest to confound the establishment with your religion, in order that it may derive all the sanctity of the religion itself. It is mine to separate them; but they may as well attempt to confound the military establishment, by which the officers and soldiers are paid, with the tactics and manœuvres which it is their duty to learn.

In order to answer this last objection, it will be necessary to prove, either that the Protestant establishment would undergo no alteration from the emancipation of the Catholic, or that if it was to undergo an alteration, the Protestant religion, so far from being injured

injured, would be highly benefited by the change. And I prefer the latter, because I believe in my soul, that if some very material alteration be not speedily made in our religious establishments, there will be an end not only to all religion amongst us, but to all moral principle, without which religion is a farce. As the legislature of this country have been mistaken in their attempt to promote religion, by their system of persecution, so also have they been utterly mistaken in the nature and effects of religious establishments. They have confounded the interest of the clergy with the interest of religion, and they have imagined that, in proportion as they enriched the Protestant's clergy, they were promoting the Protestant religion; and that, by dooming the Catholic clergy to have no establishment whatsoever, they were consigning the Catholic religion to eternal oblivion.

Was I on a subject upon which I could expect any share of candour, I would rest the whole argument on the fact. I would ask, has the Protestant religion been promoted, in proportion as the Protestant clergy have been enriched? Have the numbers of the Catholic religion diminished, according to the views of the legislature, who doomed their clergy to poverty, and to have no establishment at all? The state of the population of the two sects is sufficiently well known to prove that the reverse is the fact; and if you will examine the nature of these establishments, you will discover which is best adapted for the purpose of promoting their respective religions. From that absurd notion of promoting religion, by enriching its clergy, the Protestant establishment has made men of fortune of its clergy; and it has made them to live with men

of fortune, and to live as men of fortune; it has induced them to live with men of fashion, with men of pleasure, and with men of the world; and it has made them to live as men of fashion, as men of pleasure, and as men of the world; it has thrown them entirely into that class of men, whose education, whose high sense of honour, and whose respect for the opinion of an observant world, renders the attendance of a minister of religion almost unnecessary; but it has taken them from the dull, but useful rounds of parochial duties: it has estranged them from cultivating a friendly and intimate acquaintance with the lower classes of the people, whose want of education, whose want of a sense of honour, and whose ignorance of moral obligation, makes the constant and friendly attendance of a minister of religion, indispensibly necessary to keep them from falling into irreligion; to keep them from that vice and debauchery, which, unsupported by any other fund than that of their labour and their industry, which it must shortly consume, must make them bad subjects under any government, must lead them to pilfering and punishment, perhaps, to robbery and murder, and to a disgraceful death.

By this establishment you have raised excessive hopes of preferment in the minds of the clergy, from the inequalities it has left in the provisions which it makes for them, by which their characters have been subjected to the imputation of cringing, and servility to the dispensers of preferment; to the meanly sacrificing their civil and political rights and opinions upon the altar of an earthly superior, by which they appear, in the eyes of the people, as men either disregarding, or disbelieving that leading and essential tenet of the Christian religion, which forbids

the sacrifice of their duty to their worldly promotion. Injurious as these defects in this establishment, for which such fears are entertained, have proved to your religion, they almost vanish when I come to consider the evils which arise from the mode of payment which it allots its clergy. I shall not dwell on how destructive this part of the establishment has proved to the agriculture of your country, the most important branch of industry in which your people can be employed. I shall confine myself to state, that it has sown the seeds of eternal rancour, animosity and litigation, between the minister and his parishioners; it has allied the minister of the meek and charitable religion of Christ, with the very dregs of the earth; it has made him one in a company with valuers, with proctors, with process servers, and with civil bill attornies; it has made him the principal suitor in that hell upon earth, the civil bill court, where perjury is all prevalent; it has converted the minister of the disinterested religion of Christ, into a tithe settling auctioneer, distributing his liquors in order to intoxicate his bidders, that they may vie with one another for the purchase of his wares; it has made them appear the most avaricious, and the greatest persecutors, who, by the tenets of the religion it is their duty to inculcate, should be the most disinterested, and the least worldly; it has made it appear to the world, as if this establishment was instituted to make the people sensible of their indigence, by a comparison with the wealth of their clergy; to make them sensible of their own wants, by a comparison with the abundance in the hands of their clergy; to make them sensible how miserably their hard labour was rewarded by a comparison with the indolence, but immense and sudden fortunes of their

CLERGY; it has made it appear to the world, as if this establishment was instituted in this country, for no other purpose than to provide exorbitantly for the families and connections of the political jobbers, and political advocates for the constitution in church and state, in its present limited condition; and it has made it appear to the world, as if YOUR PROTESTANT RELIGION had no other business in your country, than to support this establishment, and not the establishment to support the religion.

Turn your eyes to that establishment, or rather no establishment, which you forced on the Catholic religion, with a view to its abolition; you have not enabled its clergy to mock the simplicity of the Christian religion by the splendour of their equipages, by the magnificence of their palaces, their furniture, or their side boards, by the massyness of their plate, nor by the voluptuousness or luxury of their tables; you have not tempted them, for you have not enabled them to desert their parishes, and their religious duties, in search of pleasure at Bath, at London, in your capital, at the water-drinking places, the resort of the fashionable: No; you have apportioned their salaries to the discharge of their duty, and you have called out the strongest incitements in man,—the procuring a subsistence, and the hopes of bettering their condition, to stimulate them to the most active discharge of their duty.

I am not an advocate for either establishment; for I am as averse to that establishment, which, by its enormity, sets the clergy above the discharge of their religious duty, as I am to that establishment, which, by obliging the clergy to humour the weakness, or to encourage the ignorance of his parishioners, as the only means of procuring a subsistence, makes it an office beneath a man of education.

tion. *But I cannot but observe, you have an example in your country of an establishment, by which a greater number than those of the established religion are carefully and diligently instructed in their religious duties, by a resident clergy, of the purest morals, the most decorous manners, and of the greatest learning, between whom and their parishioners the greatest amity and affection subsist; and not the fifteenth part so burdensome to the nation as your Protestant establishment.*

I am aware, that in the eyes of weak and timid men, who subscribe to the doctrine, that reformation is the parent of revolution, I shall appear as one who has entered on a delicate subject with too much freedom; as a dangerous man, as a Jacobin, as one that would embroil my hands in the blood of his countrymen.— But I will appeal from such contemptible decision to the sounder judgement of those, who subscribe to the safer doctrine, *that abuses are the parent of revolution, and that a timely and radical reform of those abuses, as well in church as in state, are the only security against those convulsions, which shake society to its foundation. An eye-witness to the horrors of a revolution in another country, I must be more than a monster to wish to see them raging in my own. But if ever there was a time when it behoved men in public stations to be explicit, if ever there was a time when those scourges of the human race, called politicians, should lay aside their duplicity and their finesse, it is the present moment. Be assured, the people of this country will no longer bear, that their welfare should be made the sport of a few family factions; be assured, they are convinced their true interest consists in putting down men of self-creation, who have no object in view but that of aggrandizing themselves and their families, at the expence*
of

of the public ; and in setting up men who shall represent the nation, who shall be accountable to the nation, and who shall do the business of the nation. And if I could bring my mind to suspect that my Catholic countrymen, after they had been embodied in the constitution amidst their Protestant and Presbyterian fellow citizens, would basely desert the common cause of our general freedom, by enlisting under the banners of this or that family monopolist, I should conceive that, in having been the advocate for their emancipation, I had been the advocate for their disgrace. But honour, interest, and the rising spirit of the nation, forbid such unworthy suspicions.

If I was to judge by the dead silence with which this is received, I should suspect what I have said was not very palatable to some men in this House ; but I have not risked connections endeared to me by every tie of blood and friendship, to support one set of men in preference to another : I have hazarded too much, to allow the breath of calumny to taint the objects I have had in view, from the part I have taken. Immutable principles, on which the happiness and liberty of my countrymen depend, convey to my mind the only substantial boon for which great sacrifices should be made. I might allay the fears of the Protestant monopolists for what, in the true spirit of political bigotry, they call their Protestant ascendancy, by stating, that as the boroughs continue in the hands of Protestant proprietors, centuries must pass away before the Catholics can participate, in any considerable portion, of the political power of their country. But I am contending for the purity of the constitution, not for its abuses. I disclaim contending for Catholic freedom, in the hope, that the grant may be a dead letter. I disclaim contending for Catholic freedom,

freedom, in the hope, that the rights and liberties of my country may continue to be monopolised, in the same manner after their emancipation as they were before. BUT I HERE AVOW MYSELF THE ZEALOUS AND EARNEST ADVOCATE FOR THE MOST UNQUALIFIED EMANCIPATION OF MY CATHOLIC COUNTRYMEN, IN THE HOPE, AND CONVICTION, THAT THE MONOPOLY OF THE RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES OF MY COUNTRY, WHICH HAS HITHERTO EFFECTUALLY WITHSTOOD THE EFFORTS OF A PART OF THE PEOPLE, MUST YIELD TO THE UNANIMOUS WILL, TO THE DECIDED INTEREST, AND TO THE GENERAL EFFORT OF A WHOLE UNITED PEOPLE. It is from this conviction, and it is for that transcendantly important object, that (while the Noble Lord [Kingsborough] and the Right Hon. Secretary, are offering to risk their lives and fortunes in support of a system that militates against the liberty of my countrymen) I will risk every thing dear to me on earth. It is for this great object I have, I fear, more than risked connections dearer to me than life itself. But he must be a spiritless man, and this a spiritless nation, not to resent the baseness of a British minister, who has raised our hopes in order to seduce a rival to share with him the disgrace of this accursed political crusade, and blasts them after, that he may degrade a competitor to the station of a dependant; and, that he may destroy friendship his nature never knew, he has sported with the feelings of a whole nation; raising the cup with one hand to the parched lip of expectancy, he has dashed it to the earth with

the

the other, in all the wantonness of insult, and with all the aggravation of contempt. Does he imagine, that the people of this country, after he has tantalized them with the cheering hope of present alleviation, and of future prosperity, will tamely bare to be forced to a re-endurance of their former sufferings, and to a re-appointment of their former spoilers? Does he, from confidence of long success in debauching the human mind, exact from you, *calling yourselves* the representatives of the people of Ireland, *to reject a bill, which has received the unanimous consent of your constituents?* or does he mean to puzzle the versatile disposition of this House, *on which he has made so many successful experiments already*, by distracting you between obedience to his *imperious mandates*, and obedience to the *will of the people you should represent?* or does he flatter himself that, because he has succeeded in betraying his own country, into exchanging that peace, by which she might have retrieved her shattered finances, for a war, in which he has squandered twenty times a greater treasure, in the course of two years, than with all his famed œconomy, he had been able to save, in the course of ten; for a war in which the prime youth of the world have been offered up, victims to his ambition and his schemes, as boundless and presumptuous, as ill-concerted and ill-combined; for a war in which the plains of every nation in Europe have been crimsoned with oceans of blood; *for a war in which his country has reaped nothing but disgrace, and which must ultimately prove her ruin?* Does he flatter himself, that he will be enabled, Satan like, to end his political career by involving the whole empire in a civil war, from which nothing can accrue, but a doleful and barren conquest to the victor?

victor? I trust the people of England are too wise and too just to attempt to force measures upon us they would reject with disdain themselves; I trust they have not so soon forgotten the lesson they so recently learnt from America, which should serve as a lasting example to nations, against employing force to subdue the spirit of a people DETERMINED TO BE FREE! But if they should be so weak, or so wicked, as to suffer themselves to be seduced by a man, to whose soul duplicity and finessè is as congenial, as ingenuousness and fair dealing is a stranger; to become the instruments of supporting A FEW ODISIOUS PUBLIC CHARACTERS IN POWER AND RAPACITY, AGAINST THE INTEREST AND AGAINST THE SENSE OF A WHOLE PEOPLE. *If we are to be dragooned into measures against our will, by a nation that would lose her last life, and expend her last guinea, in resenting a similar insult, if offered to herself:---I trust in God, she will find in the people of this country a spirit in no wise inferior to her own.*

You are at this moment at the most awful period of your lives:—the Minister of England has committed you with your country, and on this night your ADOPTION OR REJECTION OF THIS BILL, MUST DETERMINE IN THE EYES OF THE IRISH NATION, WHICH YOU REPRESENT, THE MINISTER OF ENGLAND, OR THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND! And although you are convinced you do not represent the people of Ireland; although you are convinced, *every man of you*, that you are self-created, it does not alter the nature of the contest, it is still a contest between the Minister of England and the people of Ireland; and the THE WEAKNESS OF

YOUR TITLE SHOULD ONLY MAKE YOU THE MORE CIRCUMSPECT IN THE EXERCISE OF YOUR POWER.—Obey the British Minister ; disregard the voice of the people :—France must have lost her senses if she hesitates what part she will take ; it is not an eighty-fourth department you will have moulded to *her* wishes ; it is not simply a La Vendee you will have kindled in the bosom of *your* country. For if you shall have once convinced the people of this country that you are TRAITORS TO THEM, AND HIRELINGS TO THE MINISTER OF AN AVARICIOUS DOMINEERING NATION, under the outward appearance of a sister country. If you shall have convinced the people of this country, *that the free national constitution for which they were committed, and for which they risked every thing dear to them in 1782, has been destroyed by the bribery of a British Minister, and the unexampled venality of an Irish Parliament. If you shall have convinced them that, instead of rising and falling with England, they are never to rise, but when she has been humbled by adversity, and that they must fall, when she becomes elated by prosperity. If you shall have convinced the people of this country, that instead of reciprocal advantage, nothing is to be reaped from their connection with England, but supremacy and aggrandizement on one side, and a costly venality, injury, insult, degradation, and poverty on the other ; it is human nature, that you shall have driven the people of this country to court the alliance of any nation able and willing to break the chains of a bondage not more galling to their feelings than RESTRICTIVE OF THEIR PROSPERITY.*

The gentlemen at the opposite side of the House have attempted to influence you by the mention of Jackson ;

son : so will I.—Read the correspondence of that traitor with your enemy, and you will find a volume of instruction in every line he has written.—If the people of this country do enjoy the Constitution in Church and state, why has that traitor found the people of the one country, freer from that oppression which goads nations into all the horrors of a revolution?—Why has he found the people of the other more highly sublimated to his purpose? Examine the whole of his intelligence, and you will find the weakness of your country in the conduct you have pursued, and in the converse of that conduct only you can establish her strength. Do not depend on the bayonet for the support of your measure; believe me, that in proportion as your measures require force to support them, in an exact proportion are they radically and mischievously bad. Believe me, there is more strength in the affections and confidence of the people, than if you were to convert every second house in the nation into barracks for your soldiery. And when the gentlemen (Cusse and Kingsborough) whom I have heard this night tell you, that to act in contempt of the public opinion, is spirit and firmness; and that to act with a decent respect for that opinion, is timidity and cowardice;—they make the character of the legislator to merge into the character of the duellist; and they set you upon splitting points of honour with your constituents. Is it not enough that you live in the age and in the midst of the horrors of revolutions, to deter you from acting in contempt of the public opinion? Have you not had examples enough to convince you, that men in throwing off the russet frock for the uniform of the soldier, do not at all times throw away the ties of kindred and of blood? Have you not had examples enough to convince you,

that even soldiers cannot at all times be brought to shed the blood of their parents, their kindred, and their friends? *And have you not had a great and memorable example to convince you, that the soldiers of an odious government may become the soldiers of the nation?*—If these are plain truths, this is the time to tell them.—If I speak daggers to you, it is that neither you nor my country may ever feel them.—BUT IF YOU WISH TO BE DECEIVED, HEARKEN TO THOSE MEN WHO ARE INTERESTED IN RISKING EVERY THING, THAT THEY MAY CONTINUE TO MONOPOLIZE THE WHOLE POLITICAL POWER OF YOUR COUNTRY.—HEARKEN TO THOSE MEN WHO ARE INTERESTED IN RISKING EVERY THING, THAT THEY MAY CONTINUE TO DRAW THEIR BETTER INHERITANCE FROM THE SALE OF THE WELFARE OF YOUR COUNTRY;—but let me caution you, whose property is too considerable to be hazarded in the base pursuit after the rights and property of your enslaved and impoverished countrymen, to take care what part you act on this night; let me caution you, that the decision of this night, goes much further than even the important bill under your consideration. You, none of you, can be ignorant that the British Minister has designs in procrastinating this question, to procure advantages for his own country, at the expence of your's, “*greater than she was capable of receiving SINCE THE REVOLUTION, AT LEAST SINCE THE UNION.” And so strongly impressed is this on the public mind, that you who shall on this night vote for the rejection of this bill, will appear in the eyes of the Irish nation, not only as men voting in obedience to the British minister, against

* See Lord Fitzwilliam's Letter, printed for J. Debrett.

the voice of the people, but as men voting for an UNION WITH ENGLAND, by which this country is to be everlastingly reduced to the state of an abject province.—Fortunately, the views of the British minister have been detected; fortunately the people of this country see him in his true colours; like the desperate gamester, who has lost his all, in the wildest schemes of aggrandizement, he looks round for some dupe to supply him with the further means of future projects; and in the crafty subtleness of his soul, he fondly imagines, he has found that easy dupe in the credulity of the Irish nation. After he has exhausted his own country in a crusade against that phantom, political opinion, he flatters himself, he will be enabled to resuscitate her at the expence of yours.

As you value the peace and happiness of your country; as you value the rights and liberties of the soil that has given you birth; and if you are not lost to every sense of feeling for your own consequence and importance as men, I call on you this night to make your stand. I call on you to rally round the independence of your country, whose existence has been so artfully assailed. Believe me, the British Minister will leave you in the lurch, when he sees that the people of this nation are TOO MUCH IN EARNEST to be tricked out of their rights, or the independence of their country; after he sees that they have been sufficiently alarmed at seeing the same men who uniformly opposed the independence of their country, when it was a question in this House in eighty-two, recalled into power when that independence was to be attacked in ninety-five, when he has gained his ends of you, and when he had made you the instruments by which he shall have so divided and dis-

disgraced the opposition of England, as to render it impossible to form an efficient government out of his opponents, he will make his peace with this country, by conceding this measure, leaving you "fixed figures for the hand of scorn to point its slow and moving finger at."—Gracious God! that you should fall into that very error, which has so recently overwhelmed a great nation in such unheard-of calamities! Will you not take warning from the fate of the government of France, which by not adapting its conduct to the changes of the public mind, has brought ruin on itself, and devastation on its country?

What a display of legislation have we had on this night? artificers who neither know the foundation on which they work, the instruments they ought to use, nor the materials required! Is it on the narrow basis of monopoly and exclusion you would erect a temple to the growing liberty of your country? Is it by foreign troops you would lead the ardent spirit of your countrymen? Is it in the dusty records of barbarous ages you would seek for that existent mind to which you should adapt your laws? If you will legislate; know, that on the broad basis of immutable justice only, you can raise a lasting, beauteous temple to the liberty of your island; whose ample base shall lodge, and whose roof shall shelter her united family from the rankling inclemency of rejection and exclusion. Know, that reason is that silken thread by which the lawgiver leads his people; and, above all, know, that in the knowledge of the temper of the public mind, consists the skill and the wisdom of the legislator.

Do not imagine that the minds of your countrymen have been stationary, while that of all Europe has been rapidly

rapidly progressive ; for you must be blind not to perceive, that the whole European mind has undergone a revolution, neither confined to this nor to that country, but as general as the great causes which have given it birth, and still continue to feed its growth. In vain do these men, who subsist but on the abuses of the government under which they live, flatter themselves, that what we have seen these last six years, is but the fever of the moment, which will pass away as soon as the patient has been let blood enough. As well may they attempt to alter the course of nature, without altering her laws. If they would effect a counter revolution in the European mind, they must destroy commerce and its effects ; they must abolish every trace of the mariner's compass ; they must consign every book to the flames ; they must obliterate every vestige of the invention of the press ; they must destroy the conduit of intelligence, by destroying the institution of the post-office ; then, and not till then, they and their abuses may live on, in all the security which ignorance, superstition, and want of concert in the people can bestow. But while I would overwhelm with despair those men who have been nursed in the lap of venality and prostitution ; who have been educated in contempt and ridicule of a love for their country ; and who have grown grey in scoffing at every thing like public spirit, let me congratulate every true friend to mankind, that, that *commerce*, which has begat so much independence, will continue to beget more ; and let me congratulate every friend to the human species, that the *press*, which has sent such a mass of information into the world, will continue, with accelerated rapidity, to pour forth its treasures so beneficial to mankind. It is to these great causes

causes we are indebted, THAT THE COMBINATION OF PRIESTS AND DESPOTS, which so long tyrannized over the civil and political liberty of Europe, HAS BEEN DISSOLVED; it is to these great causes we are indebted, that no priest, be his religion what it may, dare preach the doctrine, and that no man believes the doctrine which inculcates the necessity of sacrificing every right and every blessing this world can afford, as the only means of obtaining eternal happiness in the life to come. This was the doctrine by which the despotism of Europe was so long supported; this was the doctrine by which the political Popery of Europe was supported; but the doctrine and the despotism may now sleep in the same grave, until the trumpet of ignorance, superstition, and bigotry, shall sound their resurrection! Thanks be to God, the European mind demands more substantial food than the airy nothing of metaphysical belief. Thanks be to God, the absurdity of one set of men framing OPINIONS for other men to BELIEVE, upon a subject which neither have faculties to UNDERSTAND, has been exploded; and that every heart and every mind is anxiously engaged in perfecting a civil and political code, which, as it is within the scope, so it is the most important concern of every nation on the globe. And so far from believing they would earn Heaven by a base dereliction of their rights, they are firmly convinced, that in promoting the true, civil, and political rights of man, they are advancing human society to that state of perfection, it was the design of the Creator it should attain; convinced that the CAUSE OF FREEDOM IS THE CAUSE OF GOD.